

Girl on a Bed

Girl on a Bed was first produced by Padua Playwrights at The Electric Lodge, Venice, CA, 2005, under the direction of Guy Zimmerman, and with the following cast:

Gary Christopher Allport
Laura Niamh McCormally
Rondell Hugh Dane
Antonio David Carrera
Rena Devon Carson
Danny Andy Hopper
Gloria Shannon Holt
Monica Shawna Casey
Charles Jack Kehler
Dr. Jones Gray Palmer

Characters

Gary Our hero, an actor
Dan His son
Marcia His present wife
Gloria His ex-wife
Laura A high-school senior
Rena Her best friend
Charles Her father
Monica Her mother
Mrs. Williams Her counselor
Dr. Jones Her psychologist
Rondell An ex-soldier
Antonio Rondell's sometime associate
Chorus Lines in italics

“Death is a barking where there are no dogs.”

*And so we imagine snow falling through a black night,
ascribing meaning to time and experience.*

And Gary remembers his dead boy.

Danny Boy.

*Before he was shot that fateful afternoon by an
unknown assassin.*

A drive-by.

A stupid junkie.

A kid on a bike.

We will never know.

And his ashes were strewn into the Pacific.

Dirty ashes into the dirty Pacific,

And so who cares?

*Hopefully the Sun will burn it up one day, clean it up,
purify it and glorify it, include it into itself in an
endless blaze.*

But probably not.

And even if it did it has nothing to do with us.

Nothing to do with us.

Who are here now mourning our losses.

This is Gary.

Gary Hello.

*We play our parts and say what needs to be said in
this sad story.*

But true.

Sad but true. So let's go.

Gary We're in this room.

Interior. Day.

Gary We're in this room. *(Weeps)*

Okay. Okay. Then what happened?

Gary I go over there, to his apartment, downtown.

Whose? Dan's? Your boy's?

Gary Yes. Not really an apartment. It's a room, downtown,
near the park.

Downtown?

Gary What I say?

Downtown.

Gary And there's two guys in there. Criminals. Scumbags.
Here we are: Downtown, in a room.

Dan This is my Dad.

Gary Who are these people, Daniel?

Dan Antonio and Rondell.

Gary Who are they?

Dan They are my friends.

Gary They are not your friends. They can't be your friends.

Dan Antonio and Rondell.

Gary *(To Audience)* And that's how ordinary life came to an
end. The ordinary pleasures of life. The family gather-
ing, the picnic, the holiday, the movie, the marriage,
the ball game. Life was worthless and had no meaning.
Trash. Then he was shot in the park. Probably by some
spic junkie, some greaser know-nothing homeboy,
some dumb-ass mower and blower, some migrant from
the jungle South, the impoverished South, with his
pop-gun, his strut, his gold chain, his wise-ass mum-
bo-jumbo, his loud-mouth bullshit, his toothless grin,
his shit-eating attitude, the fucking fathead piece of shit.

Pause.

You don't know that, Gary.

Gary *(To Audience)* I'm sorry.
You're a racist.

Gary I'm sorry.
You're a racist, Gary.

Gary I'm not, really.
You're a fucking racist.

Gary And you're nothing much either, I might add.
And on top of that—you were going to kill somebody.

Gary Shit on a stick is the phrase that comes to mind.
Remember that?

Gary Shit on a stick, walking around, making noise. Quack, quack. You have any more questions?
Yes, I do. Is there hope?

Gary Yes, there is hope. But it's not where you think it is.
Where do I think it is?

Gary You think it's in the future, you think it's in the past.
I see.

Gary But I'll tell you where it is.
Tell, tell.

Gary It's up your ass. Just as you thought! *(Laughs)* Okay?
You're in a bad way, Gary.
You're depressed.

GARY laughs

You're demented.
It's no joke. I think you should apologize.
(To Audience) He'll laugh like that for about twenty minutes now.

Let's cut.
Cut to twenty mintutes later. Interior. Day.
Rats live down here. And crazy people, people with ideas.

Antonio Hey!
Like Antonio.

Antonio Hey, you whitebread piece of shit.
Don't say anything, Gary.

Gary Fuck off, greaseball.

Antonio Hey! Gringo! Hijo de puta!

Gary Go back to Mexcio and make noise. Run your blowers at the wind.
Now you did it.

Gary In the fucking dust, in the fucking Grim.
Ha!

Gary And the black guy's a slob. Rondell. This is Rondell.

Rondell Take it easy, Gary.

Gary We're not gonna be able to do this. See the story, find the meaning of the story.

Rondell We can try, we can try. That's why we're here, am I right?

Gary We can see it, but we can't understand it.
We'll take a look. Interior. Day.

Gary It's sad. That's all I'll say.
We'll need Danny Boy, back from the dead.

Dan I'm doing Danny.
We need Laura J. Back from the dead.

Laura I'll do Laura.
We need Antonio.
(Who is Death himself.)

Whom we've already met.

Antonio Yo, 'Mano. Here I am.
We'll need the parents, whoever they are.
Let's see what happens. Let's see if we can find them.
You start, Dan.

Dan Laura?

Laura Hi.

Dan We're in this room. And there's a girl on the bed.
Interior. Day.

Dan There's a girl on the bed.
Go on.

Dan There's a girl on the bed. And she's dead. You know?
And I didn't realize it. And then I realized, holy shit,
it's the same girl.
The same girl?

Dan As the one I saw. On the video.
Laura?

Laura Hi.

Dan Doing these guys. One after the other, two at a time,
and so on.
Yes.

Dan And then I'm sitting there, and I go: Who's the girl?
Is it Laura?

Dan On the bed. What's up? Is she asleep? What's that
smell? I was alone at the time. When I realized. I was
alone in the room with a dead person.
Interior Room. Day. A disgraceful, filthy room,
without light, where Danny sits staring into space. In
the background, a body on a bed. It's Laura. She's
dead.

Dan I realized I had seen this girl before.
He'd seen her in a porno film. Laura. And he'd met her
at a meeting once, by chance.

Dan She seemed nice. She seemed lonely. She looked like she
was glad to be with these guys. I liked her. I thought,
she must be using. On the other hand, she was grateful
for the contact, the sexual embrace, the attention. So it
was interesting, because she was enjoying herself.

Gary On the other hand, I feel sick for the stupidity of
the universe.
No, that's you, Gary, not the universe.

Gary The depravity and mindless exploitation.
The universe is not stupid.

Gary The endless competition.
Agree with you there.

Gary I'm sick of it.
We all agree.

Gary Along with the reproductive process.
It's you, Gary. This has nothing to do with Danny
Boy. It's all you. It's all on you.

Gary This stupid culture with its stupid fat people on a
stupid planet.
Thanks, Gary.
Sit down.

Gary I feel for this girl.
We know you do.

Gary She could be my daughter.
She could be, but she isn't.
Don't start crying.

Gary I'm sorry.

Cut to Laura. Close.

Laura Well. There were a couple of the guys I knew in the film, plus I knew the producer, but it was really about the money. And something about seeing yourself, seeing yourself on the screen. You know, like falling. And I do like to be touched, I really do.

Gary As we try to live amidst the stupid cars and the garbage and the fumes.

Laura It's not me so much as the story of me, which is different.

Gary Interesting.

Laura It's not me.
Angle—Danny.

Dan I could tell she was lonely there. I could tell she wanted love.

Gary You become a junkie because nothing lasts. You got to do everything again and again and again.

Dan You want to be happy. You want to feel good.

Gary And then you do it again.

Laura It's not me. It's only the story of me.

Dan What did you want then?

Laura I said to Rondell: If something happens, don't bring me back.
Angle—Rondell.

Laura Let me go.

Rondell What?

Laura Okay?

Rondell What you say, girl?

Laura If I OD, you know?

Rondell No, what?

Laura Let it go. Let me be. Okay?

Rondell No.

Laura Just leave me there.

Rondell I won't. I won't do that.

Laura Thanks a lot.

Rondell He'll do it. Antonio.

Laura Thanks.

Rondell He's the Angel of Death. Not me.
Back to Gary.
Who could be imagining this confrontation with the notorious Rondell.

Gary What do you think about anything? Do you ever think about anything?

Rondell Who?

Gary You, Rondell.

Rondell Me?

Gary I'm talking to you.

Rondell Fuck you, I don't have to talk to you.

Gary Fucking ignorant asshole.

Rondell No. The answer is no. I'm not interested in thinking about anything because there's nothing to think about. There is fucking nothing to think about. I just stay high, and that's all I want to do. So maybe I think about money, because you need money or a gun.

Gary You don't care?

Rondell No, but I keep my word, I keep my promises, which is more than I can say for most people.

Gary So you'd let her die?

Rondell There's nothing you can do. Once they get there, they're gone.

Gary Where? Once they get where?
Rondell Down, man, down.
Gary Why?
Rondell You can't bring them back. Once you go that far, you can't come back.
Exterior Day—Gary and Danny's mom, Gloria, in the San Fernando Valley.
Gary I'm trying to understand myself.
Gloria Are you?
Gary Yes.
Gloria That's good.
Gary It's not easy.
Gloria No.
Gary Pretty near impossible.
Gloria Pretty near?
Pretty near?
Gary Pretty near.
Gloria How're you doing that, exactly?
Gary Maybe we should talk another time.
Gloria That's all right, never mind.
Gary I go to meetings, I see a shrink.
Gloria Good, Gary.
Gary And so on.
Gloria That's good. And Marcia? How's Marcia?
Gary She's good.
Gloria I'm glad. What's up?
Gary There's a lot of suffering in the world, Gloria.
Gloria I know that.
Gary Why?

Gloria I don't know why. Come up with it, Gary. I have things to do.
Gary I don't want to worry you.
Gloria Is it Dan?
Gary I think he's using.
Gloria What?
Gary I think he's using drugs.
Gloria What drugs?
Gary Hard drugs.
Interior Day—Laura in high school, with her counselor, whose name is Mrs. Williams.
Mrs. Williams Do you feel like you have emotional problems?
Laura Not really, no.
Mrs. Williams How do you feel?
Laura I feel fine.
Mrs. Williams You ever get down?
Laura Get down?
Mrs. Williams You know, on yourself.
Laura Not really.
Mrs. Williams In school?
Laura School is a nightmare.
Mrs. Williams How so?
Laura Because it's dangerous. The kids have knives and guns and the teachers try to scare you. You have these ignorant fat people yelling at you all the time how you're going to be homeless and die. And I think they're right.
Mrs. Williams How so?
Laura I think I will be homeless and die.
Mrs. Williams Why is that? Why should that happen?

Laura Because that's my future, because I have no other future. There is no other future for me.

Mrs. Williams Who told you that?

Laura Everybody tells me that.

Mrs. Williams Your parents tell you that, too?

Laura Especially my parents. They're sick people and they take it out on me, because they're so disillusioned and sick.

Mrs. Williams What's wrong with them?

Laura They're mean. Well, I shouldn't say that.

Mrs. Williams Go on.

Laura They're just cold and mean.

Mrs. Williams Do you think we could all meet together some time?

Laura Not my father so much. And my mom's okay. Actually. She just never comes down.

Mrs. Williams Down?

Laura Stairs.

Mrs. Williams Did you hear what I asked?

Laura No.

Mrs. Williams Can we all meet together?

Laura She drinks.

Mrs. Williams Could I try to set it up?

Laura Sure, I guess you could try.

Mrs. Williams Good, then I think I will.

Laura Whatever.

Pause.

Mrs. Williams I don't have any more time right now.

Laura I wish people would do one thing without money being attached to it. One thing. Just one nice thing.

Mrs. Williams Laura.

Laura Who cares? If you have some other jerk coming in here? I don't give a fuck about that. That's your problem.

Mrs. Williams You have a lot of anger, Laura.

Laura Yeah, I do, because there isn't a single thing that's done that's done for Christian reasons, not one.

Mrs. Williams Christian?

Laura You heard me. This is supposed to be a Christian country.

Mrs. Williams I'm glad you can let some of that anger out.

Laura Thank you. Thanks a lot.
She doesn't leave. She stares at the stupid green wall.

Laura We live like dogs.
She says.

Mrs. Williams I'm sorry you feel that way.

Laura Are you?

Mrs. Williams Yes, I am.

Laura I think you're lying.

Mrs. Williams Laura?

Laura You're not sorry at all.

Mrs. Williams Really, Laura.

Laura You want me to leave so you can bullshit the next asshole who walks in here.

Mrs. Williams We do have to stop.

Laura It's all an act and you don't even know it.

Mrs. Williams Excuse me, Laura.
Cut to: Rondell and Danny Boy.

Rondell You like acting, kid?
Dan Yeah, I do, I like acting.
Rondell Do you have any confidence or do you freeze up inside?
Dan I freeze up.
Rondell That's what I thought.
Dan Why'd you think that?
Rondell You're like me. I can see it in your body.
Dan What?
Rondell I can see it in your body armor. Rather, your body is armor. That's why you can't have any relationships.
Dan That's not true.
Rondell Really? Who do you love?
Dan I love my mom. I love my dad. I have a girlfriend.
Rondell You have a girlfriend?
Dan Sure I do.
Rondell What's her name?
Dan I don't want to talk about her.
Rondell She have a name?
Dan Of course she has a name. She's not nameless.
Rondell What is it?
Dan I'm not gonna tell you her name.
Rondell Okay. Your parents?
Dan What?
Rondell Are they divorced?
Dan They're divorced.
Rondell Because your dad couldn't talk either, probably.
Dan My dad can talk.
Rondell He can't communicate either.
Dan My dad's an actor.
Rondell You picked it up from him.

Dan What?
Rondell The failure to communicate.
Dan I don't think that's true.
Rondell You say that a lot.
Dan What?
Rondell I don't think that's true. You don't know, actually, do you?
Dan What?
Rondell What's true.
Dan Does anybody?
Rondell Yeah, me. I know. Because I'm a soldier, among other things.
Dan What's true?
Rondell We just shot up, didn't we. We just fixed.
Dan But I didn't shoot up, remember.
Rondell Oh, that's right, I forgot. So you think you're not as bad as me now.
Dan I snorted, is all.
Rondell You snorted, right. So, anyway, shooted, snorted—we're relaxed now. Is that true?
Dan I guess so.
Rondell Sure it's true. That's why you like it. You can relax inside your armor. And I'll bet your dad is too.
Dan Is what?
Rondell Is dysfunctional. What's his name?
Dan Gary.
Rondell Yeah, Gary. You got a lot of things from Gary. Frozen stiff and a gimp walk and acting.
Dan You know my father?

Rondell I know him through you. Boys are their fathers and girls are their mothers. Dysfunctional people breed dysfunctional people.

Dan What are you, a psychologist?

Rondell I'm an army man and I'm a drug addict.

Dan Sorry.

Rondell That's how I know. That's how I relax. So I don't need love and I don't need sex. You follow me?

Dan I think so.

Rondell You think?

Dan I don't know.

Rondell That's my choice. Some guys drink themselves to death. And you?

Dan I don't know.

Rondell That's for sure. That's the truth. I'm helping you now, whether you realize it or not, and you don't realize it. Because I'm satisfied for a minute. Otherwise I don't give a shit. You follow me? I'm an addict. That's my choice.

Dan My father re-married.

Rondell They get along?

Dan Sure.

Rondell You?

Dan I get along fine.

Rondell With his new wife? You get along with his wife?

Dan Sure.

Rondell That's nice.

Dan They wouldn't like it if they knew, like, you know.

Rondell They're right. They're right to worry. And your mom?

Dan My mom?

Rondell Your real mom. You see her?

Dan Of course I do.

Rondell That's nice.
Cut to: The gorgeous Laura. This teen American beauty. Monica, her mom, is upstairs.

Laura I go home and I don't know what to do. I have all this energy. I should be worried about my future, but am I? No, because cars are the future. The only future is more cars. How could I be interested in that? More and more cars. And for cars we need oil, more and more oil.

Monica Laura?

Laura Yeah.

Monica Is that you?

Laura It's me.

Monica I want to talk to you.

Laura I can't right now.

Monica I want to talk to you.

Laura I'm busy.

Monica Don't use that tone with your mother.

Laura What tone?

Monica You know what tone.
Pause.

Monica Did you hear me?

Laura How could I not hear you?
Pause.

Monica Just don't do it.

Laura Mom?
Pause.

Laura I was thinking about my future.

Pause.

Laura Are you interested?

Monica You have no future.

Laura Oh.

Monica Not the way you act.

Laura Oh.

Monica No future for you, kid.

Laura I was thinking it was cars, actually. More and more cars. That's what we need. Cars and oil. Then everyone will be happy.

Monica Not you.

Laura Thanks, Mom.

Monica You're welcome.

Pause.

Monica That's what happens when you talk nasty to your mother.

Enter CHARLES.

Laura Dad?

Charles Hi, Laura. Where's your mother?

Laura Upstairs.

Charles Okay.

Laura Scared, Dad?

Charles What do you mean?

Laura You scared of Mom?

Charles Laura.

Laura What?

Charles Don't talk like that.

Laura Why don't you admit it?

Charles I'm your father.

Laura Why don't you go upstairs?

Charles No reason.

Laura It's because you're scared. It's because she'll say something to belittle you. And she will, too. Sooner or later, she will. Maybe around the third drink. Because she's disappointed in you. Mainly she's disappointed, our Monica, so she takes it out on us. Don't cry, Dad.

Charles I'm not crying.

Laura We were talking about my future.

Charles Good.

Laura It wasn't good. Why do you say good when it wasn't good?

Charles I didn't know.

Laura Well, it wasn't. Anyway, I know your future. You want to know?

Charles All right, tell me.

Laura It's fear. It's a future of fear. You're afraid now and you'll just keep on being afraid. Do you want to know why?

Charles Not really, no.

Laura Because you're getting older. You're getting older and weaker. You're getting bent and gaspy, and she doesn't want to take care of you. Don't cry, Dad.

Charles I'm not crying.

Laura And I know my future, too. You want to hear it?

Charles Sure.

Laura It's no future, Dad, nada, nothing, none, zero, zilch. Ask Mom.

Charles HONEY?

Laura She's busy.

Charles HONEY?

Monica NOT NOW!

Laura I told you, Dad.
Charles I'M HOME!
Monica NOT NOW. DON'T BOTHER ME NOW!
Charles OKAY!
Pause
Laura The whole world hates America, you know. The whole world hates us and fears us. Why, Dad?
Charles Because we're gross and stupid.
Laura Can I go out?
Charles No.
Monica WHERE TO?
Laura THE MALL.
Monica No.
Charles You know you can't go out to the mall.
Monica TO DO WHAT?
Laura I'm not gonna buy anything.
Monica TO STARE AT THE BOYS AND TAKE DOPE.
Charles No way.
Monica AND ACT GROSS AND STUPID.
Laura I'll do what I want.
Monica WHAT'S THAT?
Laura I'LL DO WHAT I WANT.
Monica GO AHEAD, LAURA.
Laura I WILL.
Monica THEN DON'T COME BACK.
Laura I WON'T.
Charles Hold on, Laura.
Laura You're all such a bunch of liars and cheats, Dad. Enron and Associates.
Charles But not you?

Laura I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.
Monica REALLY?
Laura YEAH!
Monica BY SELLING YOUR ASS?
Laura THAT'S RIGHT, MOM.
Monica THEN DON'T EVER COME BACK HERE, LAURA.
Laura FINE, I WON'T.
Charles Have something to eat.
Laura I'm not hungry.
Charles How 'bout some tea?
Laura Are you kidding, Dad?
Charles I'm having some.
Laura Don't you understand what's going on, Dad?
Charles I think you're having problems.
Monica I THINK SHE'S HAVING SERIOUS PROBLEMS.
Laura You're terrified of her.
Charles No, I'm not.
Laura Yes, you are.
Monica I HEARD THAT.
Laura It's not MY problem.
Laura goes to the bathroom. Charles stands, hesitates, looks up, starts for the stairs, changes his mind and goes into the kitchen. Sound of water running. Cut to: Rondell and Dan.
Rondell It doesn't take long to see what we're made of, see what kind of weird animal we are. Holes on both ends. Two eyes and a nose.
Dan Excuse me?
Rondell You've seen that already, haven't you?
Dan I think I have.

Rondell Two ears. Everything by twos. What do you make of that?

Dan I don't know what to make of it.

Rondell I suppose things sort of bounce off of you, because of your youth.

Dan No, I get, uh, disturbed. I'm disturbed by it.

Rondell What do you think it's all about?

Dan I don't know.

Rondell That's why I get off, so to speak, stop worrying about it.

Dan You worry about it?

Rondell Sure I do, what do you think? I'm sensitive. This surprises you?

Dan I guess so.

Rondell It gets to you too, I think. The blood and guts of it all, the shitting and pissing and ferocity of it all. Don't you think? That's why you like the big H.
Join the Army and you'll see for yourself. Blood and guts.

Dan Yeah, I guess.

Rondell But if you see the truth, it ought to set you straight, don't you think?

Dan I guess.

Rondell You can't guess. This ain't guesswork. It's the truth or it ain't. Don't you think?

Dan I should stop.

Rondell Absolutely. This surprises you, I would say that?

Dan I guess so.

Rondell Stop guessing so much.

Dan I never shoot it. I only snort.

Rondell You hear yourself on that?

Dan I heard it.

Rondell It don't mean shit. There ain't no difference. It's a shit-eating life, any old way.

Dan I hear you there, Rondell.

Rondell It's for people who want to die, mainly, and I don't interfere.

Dan Everybody dies.

Rondell I mean on purpose. I don't think you're a candidate for that. Do you?

Dan Uh, no, actually, I'm not.

Rondell Yeah. I see that. I see that. It's not you.
Pause. He's thinking. What could he be thinking?

Rondell You need to see that for yourself. For real. Your dad is looking for you, kid.

Dan Gary?

Rondell Word's out, he's looking for his Danny Boy.

Dan Okay.

Rondell Give him a ring. Use your cell.

Dan Okay, later.

Rondell Fine. You want to watch some sex now?

Dan Sure.

Rondell It's interesting stuff. I don't get off on it, but it's interesting. Interesting behavior.
Cut to: Gary and Marcia.

Gary I saw this guy, he's walking the street, young guy, he's got his worldly possessions on his shoulder, I saw him hitting on another guy with a bike.

Marcia Gary?

Gary This was on Wilshire Boulevard.

Marcia He hit him with a bike?

Gary No, Marcia.

Marcia Sorry.

Gary The guy being hit on had the bike.

Marcia I get it.

Gary He just starts talking, it's a form of aggression, you know? White guy. He starts talking about the bike, and he's hitting on this other guy, on the bike, he was pretty scared.

Marcia What's so fascinating?

Gary I could see both sides, I could be both people.

Marcia That's why you're good at it. That's why you're good at acting. You're a good actor.

Gary Thank you.

Marcia You have good empathy and imagination.

Gary It saddened me.

Marcia You're a sad guy.

Gary It frightened me.

Marcia And also a frightened guy.

Gary Really, Marcia.

Marcia Why?

Gary Because it could be me. I really understood that. It could be me. You like your bike, the guy says, it's a nice bike, cool bike. You like it? You enjoy it? You should. You should enjoy it. Enjoy your bike. It'll soon be over, all the good things we take for granted—holidays, family gatherings, domestic issues, job problems, traffic, open tunnels, cheap gas, public entertainment—it'll all be over. When? I'll tell you: when the Islamists defeat America. Okay? Is that worth a dollar to you? One dollar?

Marcia It'll never happen, Gary.

Gary That was *his* rant, not mine.

Marcia You seen Danny?

Gary No.

Marcia I miss him.

Gary I went looking for him, he's never home any more, he's over at that guy Rondell's a lot.

Marcia He's a junkie isn't he? Isn't Rondell a major junkie?

Gary He's an ex-Army guy.

Marcia A junkie.

Gary I believe so, yes.

Marcia You know he is, Gary.

Gary I know he is.

Marcia You have to stop it. You have to stop Danny from going over there.

Gary How, Marcia?

Marcia We'll have to intervene. We'll have to have a major intervention.

Back to: Charles, with Monica. He sits with his head in his hands.

Monica Why are you doing that?

Charles What am I doing?

Monica Why are you holding your head in your hands?

Charles Because I've lost my honor. I've lost my personal integrity.

Monica Don't sit with your head in your hands.

Charles I'm trapped.

Monica Don't stay stupid things. You can get up and walk out.

Charles I can, but I won't.

Monica Fine.

Charles Because we have to have a meeting.

Monica What kind of a meeting?

Charles A meeting at the school.

Monica It's alright with me.

Charles Okay, good.

Monica Let's have a meeting.

Charles It'll be us and the school psychologist, a Mrs. Williams, and Laura.

Monica Laura, too?

Charles Definitely Laura.

Monica That's fine with me.

Charles Okay, good.
Cut to: Gloria speaking with Gary.

Gloria I feel desperate about this, Gary, I feel hysterical.
(Pause) I think he should stay with his mother now, until we work this thing out.

Gary No.

Gloria I want him to stay with me.

Gary No.

Gloria First he goes into a program and then he stays with me.

Gary Marcia loves him.

Gloria It's nothing against Marcia.

Gary Then why?

Gloria Because you're too much in your own world, Gary. Too much Gary. And you have too many problems, and I'm terrified. Do you understand me? At last?

Gary No. What do you mean my world? You mean the theatre world? You mean actors?

Gloria I mean the world in your head, Gary. What else could I mean? I mean the self-centeredness, the self-involvement, the imagination. The phony vulnerability. Your wily, sly, cunning, manipulative ways—but you can't hear me, you never hear me, so what good is it my telling you this? Just send Danny to me! I want Danny

to stay with his mother until we straighten this thing out! Okay? You got that?
Close on Gary.
He feels like everything has happened before. He feels helpless. He feels battered by his own Fate. He feels pushed by implacable Time. He almost loves that.

He falls forward.
Gary knocks on Rondell's door.

Rondell Who is it?

Gary It's Gary! Danny's father, Gary!

Rondell Oh, Gary. What do you want, Gary?

Gary I just want to talk to you!

Rondell What about?

Gary My son!

Rondell Okay, talk.

Gary Let me in!

Rondell Why?

Gary I don't want to shout!

Rondell You can't come in now!

Gary Let me in!

Rondell I got company now!

Gary Danny?

Rondell No, he's not here!

Gary Where is he?

Rondell I don't know where he is!

Gary Okay, I'll call the police!

Rondell Fuck it, come in.

Gary Thank you.

Rondell Fuck it. I don't know where your stupid son is.

Gary I thought you had company.
Rondell I don't have company.
Gary What do you do? You get high and watch porno films?
It's the lowest of the low, the belly of the beast.
Rondell Fuck you if you don't like it.
Gary I don't care what you do.
Rondell You don't look good. You look like you're outside too much.
Gary What's that supposed to mean?
Rondell Wears you down. Next thing you know, you're living in a box.
Gary A box?
Rondell A cardboard box.
Gary Listen, I came to tell you.
Rondell Yeah, yeah.
Gary Leave my kid alone.
Rondell I don't bother him, he don't bother me.
Gary I'm telling ya.
Rondell You an alcoholic? You go to meetings? You got that look.
Gary I'm not gonna say it twice.
Rondell You can say it nine times if you want.
Gary And then I'll do what I have to.
Rondell It's a short ride, you know, from the street to the box.
Gary His mother and I.
Rondell Downhill all the way.
Gary You hear what I say?
Rondell You should know that if you go to your meetings.
Gary So I'll leave it at that.
Rondell You've heard all the stories, I'm sure.
Gary I'll leave it at that.

Rondell Gotcha, pal.
Gary Okay.
Exit Gary. He feels a little stupid, a little exposed. He stops as he's going through the door so as to reinforce his dignity, but he can't look back. He can't look Rondell in the eye. Rondell smiles. Gary closes the door behind him. A pause, then Laura appears wearing a pink negligee.
Rondell You look great, kid. You look absolutely fabulous. *And she does. Cut to: Danny Boy and his stepmother, Marcia.*
Dan I never did use needles and shit, I never shot up, I only snorted.
Marcia Doesn't matter, Dan. It's an addiction.
Dan I know. I don't want to do anything stupid.
Marcia I know you don't.
Dan I mean, I do, but I won't do it. That's it.
Marcia Good. We're with you. We're behind you.
Dan I can't waste my life.
Marcia I think it's better if you stay with your mom.
Dan You do?
Marcia I really do.
They're in the park, downtown.
Marcia You're a great kid, Danny.
Dan I still have no profession.
Marcia I know.
Dan But I'm thinkiing of taking classes again.
Marcia Acting?
Dan Yeah.
Marcia I think you're a good actor.

Dan But I don't know.

Marcia With your dad?

Dan No, not with him. He's too radical. I need something, you know, more commercial. My dad's too serious.

Marcia Sounds good to me, Dan.

Dan So I'll be seeing you for dinners and stuff.

Marcia Sounds fine with me.

Dan I'll call you.

Marcia Okay, Danny!

Cross fade to: Mrs. Williams.

Mrs. Williams She watches him as he runs across the park, over the autumn leaves. He looks young and fresh and he knows how to run. She notices herself noticing that. And then she feels sad.

Monica About what? What is she sad about?

Mrs. Williams Because she feels time, she feels the passing of time. And then she looks around and everything looks dirty, and nobody cares.

Charles Time was we had a sense of fellowship.

Monica When was that, dear?

Charles While I was growing up. Wasn't that long ago, either. You could crack jokes and kid around in those days. There was more a sense of fun, more a sense of adventure and experiment, it seems to me.

Monica For the boys, maybe. Not so much for the girls.

Charles Girls, too.

Monica You don't know.

Mrs. Williams Excuse me, is Laura aware of our appointment?

Monica I think she is.

Charles She ought to be. I definitely told her. I told her at least twice.

Mrs. Williams That's fine.

Charles She's late a lot.

Monica She's always late.

Mrs. Williams All right. We'll wait.

Monica Did you tell her?

Mrs. Williams Yes, of course.

Charles Then she's on her way.

Monica Maybe she is and maybe she isn't.

Mrs. Williams I'm reluctant to start without her.

Monica Don't start.

Mrs. Williams All right.

Charles We didn't have counselors. There was a problem, we went to the principal.

Mrs. Williams I'd like to tell you, she's the brightest kid in her class, Laura, maybe the smartest kid in the whole school.

Monica Then what's wrong with her?

Charles She's angry, she's pissed off.

Mrs. Williams Why is she so angry? Excuse me, but do you know?

Charles I don't know.

Monica I've never known why that girl is so angry.

Mrs. Williams How is it in the home?

Charles How?

Mrs. Williams What's the atmosphere like?

Charles Normal.

Monica It's perfectly normal.

Mrs. Williams There aren't problems?

Charles Well, there are definitely problems.

Mrs. Williams I see.

Monica Normal problems. Problems of discipline, of doing one's chores, things like that. School work. And she's mature beyond her age.

Charles I don't understand lateness. What is that? When a person is always late?

Mrs. Williams I'm not sure I have an answer.

Charles That's definitely one of her problems. Lateness and turmoil.

Mrs. Williams Turmoil?

Charles Disorder. Disorganization. Like she doesn't put away her stuff. She doesn't clean up her room. And she's adamant. And she gets angry if you bring it up.

Monica I'll say. And she lies.

Mrs. Williams Could be a control thing.

Charles What's that?

Mrs. Williams Like she's in charge.

Charles She's always in charge.

Mrs. Williams That's right.

Charles Always.

Monica Not with me she isn't.

Charles That's why you fight.

Monica She walks all over you.

Charles True.

Mrs. Williams Drugs?

Monica I think she takes drugs.

Charles I don't.

Monica Why shouldn't she? You do.

Charles Meds.

Monica You take your meds, your Vioxx and your Zantac and your antidepressant.

Charles It's true, I do take those.

Monica And you drank. You had your little vodka tonic while you watched your stupid sports.

Charles True. I did do that.

Monica So why shouldn't she take drugs?

Charles It's all my fault.

Mrs. Williams What does she take? Do you know?

Monica I think she's high on something most of the time.

Charles I don't know about that.

Monica I don't know what.

Mrs. Williams If she is, we'll have to do something about it, obviously.

Monica And she's got this boy thing.

Mrs. Williams What's the boy thing?

Charles This is news to me.

Monica She's too interested in sex.

Charles That's not what I hear.

Monica She wouldn't tell you about it.

Charles What I hear is she hates boys, because they're stupid and rude.

Monica Well, she likes something about them.

Mrs. Williams She's a beautiful girl.

Charles She definitely is.

Mrs. Williams She gets a lot of attention.

Charles She definitely does.

Mrs. Williams You'd have to have a little substance to be able to deal with that.

Charles What do you mean?

Mrs. Williams Well, what is she, she's seventeen?

Charles Yes.

Mrs. Williams So she's getting a massive amount of attention.

Monica We know that. She's a teenager.

Mrs. Williams So you'd have to have some inner discipline.

Monica Absolutely.

Mrs. Williams Which it doesn't look like she has, despite the fact that she's so bright.

Monica I don't know what to do about it.

Charles I don't either.

Mrs. Williams Looks like she's not going to show.

Monica And it's not the school, it's her.

Charles I wasn't going to blame the school.

Mrs. Williams We're not perfect.

Charles I think it's the whole entire culture, where everybody is lying to you all the time.

Mrs. Williams You have a point there.

Charles Continuously. Everywhere.

Monica Kind of puts us in an awkward position.

Charles Don't worry about it.

Monica I think she is getting that attitude from you.

Charles What attitude?

Monica Hopeless despair, I think it's called.

Charles You're a tough woman.

Mrs. Williams Excuse me, but what should we do? Laura's not showing up. Should we make another appointment?

Monica I don't know.

Charles Where is she? I wonder.
Back to Gary. He's found Danny Boy finally on his favorite bench in the park, sun going down in the Western sky, pink and dark blue.
It's the heavens.

Gary thinks.

It's the heavens above.

Act break here.

Gary How are you, Son?

Dan I'm cool, Dad.

Gary Nice sky.

Dan Beautiful. Pink.

Gary How's your girlfriend?

Dan I haven't seen her lately, Dad.

Gary Why not?

Dan I just haven't. She's busy.

Gary I quit drinking you know, when I was with your mother.

Dan I know that.

Gary Haven't touched the sauce.

Dan I know.

Gary I take a few pills but otherwise, I'm clean.

Dan That's good, Dad.

Gary I sit quietly in the morning and I pray to God.

Dan What do you say?

Gary I say the Lord's Prayer. Give us this day... I say Lord have mercy.

Dan Some people do that.

Gary I met a girl on that bench right over there, said I had to be saved immediately.

Dan What did you do?

Gary I told her I was a Buddhist. But she was right, you know, we have to be saved.

Dan I don't know what that means.

Gary Over and over again.

Dan And then we die.

Gary Right, so make the most of what you got.

Dan Rondell says it has no meaning at all.

Gary Rondell?

Dan My friend, Rondell.

Gary That man should be shot.

Dan Take it easy, Dad. He was a ranger in Vietnam, Rondell.

Gary Who cares? He should be put up against a wall and executed. And I think I'll be the one who does it.

Dan He thinks like you do, Dad.

Gary How could that possibly be?

Dan He doesn't want me to use. He says I shouldn't use.

Gary Well, that's interesting.

Dan He says there's a biology to everything. DNA.

Gary How would he know?

Dan He's very factual.

Gary Oh, for Christ's sake, Danny.

Dan He says some people have to kill and some people have to be junkies.

Gary Kill?

Dan You know, like in wars.

Gary You don't have to be a junkie, Dan.

Dan I know I don't.

Gary It's not you. It's not your DNA, whatever this guy Rondell thinks.

Dan He agrees with you, it's what he thinks, too.

Gary Can I meet this guy?

Dan Sure, Dad.

So that's how Gary went down to Rondell's place, which we have already seen. Cut back to: Laura, on the street, where she's talking to her friend, Rena. Street noises.

Laura Yeah, so I missed the appointment. I miss a lot of appointments.

Rena I miss a few.

Laura Who cares? It's all about the money.

Rena I'm sure they care.

Laura Sure, about themselves.

Rena There must be good people around.

Laura Sure, if you have nine billion people, there must be fifty who give a shit.

Rena It's not nine billion.

Laura Whatever.

Rena Don't exaggerate, don't extrapolate.

Laura Who says that?

Rena My uncle Dave, he's a Buddhist.

Laura At least he sounds intelligent.

Rena He's very intelligent.

Laura Who's that?

Rena Who?

Laura Him.

Rena I don't know, I'm sure.

Laura He's staring.

Rena Let him stare.

Laura He's coming over.

Rena Oh, no.

Laura He's dressed nice.

Rena He's evil.

Laura You don't know.

Antonio Hi, there.

Laura Hi.

Rena Don't talk to him.

Antonio You girls should be in school.

Laura We should, but we're not.

Antonio I can see that.

Laura Yeah.

Antonio You looking for something? What are you looking for out here?

Rena Not you, amigo.

Antonio Because you will find it.

Laura Really?

Antonio *Sí, claro*, it's the tragic mystery of life.

Rena He's a fuckin' poet.

Antonio Come with me, and I'll get you everything you want *Todo*.

Rena Don't do it.

Antonio Whatever you want.

Laura I want to know what happens. I want to know, in advance, everything that happens. I want complete control. Complete and absolute control. Can you do that?

Antonio *Si, claro*.

Rena Oh, horseshit.

Antonio *Ven' conmigo*.

Laura I can't right now.

Rena Like, never, okay?

Antonio Let me give you my card.

Laura What for?

Antonio You're a beautiful girl. You should have what you want. Here, take it.

Rena Get lost.

Antonio Give me a call when you're ready for what you want. I have my cell, I keep it on at all times.
Fade to: Gary stumbles into Antonio in the park. Park noises off.

Gary Excuse me, I'm sorry.

Antonio Get out of my way, fucking *idiota!*

Gary I said I was sorry.

Antonio Step aside.

Gary Do I know you? I think I know you.

Antonio No.

Gary Where do I know you from?

Antonio I have no idea.

Gary Rondell's. You're a friend of Rondell's, My name is Gary, Danny's father.

Antonio Oh. Okay. *Muy bien. Mucho gusto*.

Gary You remember me?

Antonio Not really, no.

Gary You don't recognize me?

Antonio I can't tell one stupid gringo from another, so get out of my way.

Gary You know my son, though, don't you?

Antonio Let go of my arm.

Gary Antonio, right?

Antonio Let go.

Gary Your name's Antonio.

Antonio That's right. *Que quiere usted, gringo?* So what do you want?

Gary Don't sell any more dope to my son.

Antonio I don't sell no stinking dope to nobody.

Gary You don't?

Antonio No. Don't say bad things. I want to get off the street, live a nice life, a nice American life, with education and a little music, and a living room and a dining room. That's all I want, a few square feet of peace and quiet.

Gary Really?

Antonio Yeah, so leave me alone.

Gary *(Menacingly)* I'll leave you alone!

Antonio Touch me and I'll kill you, motherfucker. Back off. *Gary stops. Antonio walks. Gary sobs. His life's been spared. Fade as Gary runs into Charles quite by accident.*

At a meeting.

Charles Can I join you?

Gary Sure.

Charles We're the only smokers left, looks like.

Gary Yeah, I'm gonna quit, myself

Charles Yeah, I do it all the time.

Gary Ha, ha.

Charles I liked your pitch.

Gary Thank you.

Charles Sorry about your son.

Gary I think he'll be all right.

Charles Good. Name's Charles.

Gary Glad to meet you, Charles. Gary. You have kids?

Charles I have a daughter.

Gary How is she?

Charles She's beautiful. A beauty.

Gary How old?

Charles Seventeen. She's seventeen.

Gary It's hard, it's a hard age.

Charles I agree with that. How old's your Danny Boy?

Gary Danny's in his twenties, actually. He's 26.

Charles Oh. What's he do?

Gary He's an actor, like his dad.

Charles No kidding!

Gary No.

Charles Have you... What have you...? Is he...?
But of course Gary has turned away because he always turns away from these questions of what movies he has been in and where would he have been seen on TV and so on, and so on, because in fact he's not in anything and neither is his boy.

Charles It's a rough business.
Says Charles politely.

Gary Yes, it is.
Gary's on the verge of tears so he drags on his cigarette and chokes.

Gary Excuse me.
So then he has to run away to the water fountain. Charles looks up at the moon and remembers that he is a recovering alcoholic and that life is difficult and strange.

As Laura meets Antonio in Echo Park.

Antonio People fish here.

Laura Really? Do they catch anything?

Antonio No, I don't think so.

Laura Then what are they doing?

Antonio They like to fish. Throw the thing on the water.
Una cosa. Wait for a thrill.

Laura I want to get out of my house, get away from my family, get my own place.

Antonio So? Who cares?

Laura Nobody.

Antonio *Eso es.*

Laura I guess I could get a job.

Antonio I told you, a beautiful white girl, you can have anything you want.

Laura I want a different life.

Antonio See, they just like to sit there, get off their minds.

Laura Which I'm sure is not too possible. And you? What do you do?

Antonio Me, I'm like the devil, I bring people together with their temptations. That's why you called me.

Laura You make a living?

Antonio Definitely. You will pay me.

Laura I haven't agreed to anything yet.

Antonio I'm not a pimp, but I know people. People in the Valley, they make sex films, porno. They would love you there. But you have to be eighteen. Are you eighteen?

Laura I'm eighteen.

Antonio There you go then.
He walks. Here's Rena. Interior Day.

Rena There's so much hypocrisy. It's so totally boring. You know they got one commerical they're joking about the size of a guy's thingamabob.

Laura Small.

Rena Small is right. It must be totally pathetic and they're like brutes anyway. I mean. Small or big they're gonna kick ass. And there's the girls. You see that? You see these girls in the army, they can't wait to kick butt.

Laura I feel sorry for them.

Rena I don't.

Laura They don't know what they're doing. What else are they gonna do? At least they're useful, like on a ship or a plane.

Rena Ships and planes.

Laura Ships and planes and tanks and whatever. At least they're doing something useful. What else are they capable of?

Rena Not much.

Laura Well, they're trained for it, so they got to do it sooner or later. It's so amazingly pathetic.

Rena You don't see any hope?

Laura Hope for what?

Rena Hope for the future.

Laura No. Not unless four billion people die in a hurry and they attach another brain to us so we can think straight.

Rena They might do that. I could see that, like with a micro-chip in the brain, you don't have to even see reality.

Laura That's not what I mean.

Rena Sorry.

Laura That wasn't what I meant at all.

Rena Okay.

Laura It's so disheartening.

Rena What did you mean? You mean me?

Laura Obviously, we need something to make us more intelligent, not less intelligent.

Rena Maybe we could go to another planet.

Laura Yeah, that'll do it. Great idea, Rena.

Rena Well, I'm only saying.

Laura Don't start crying. Rena? Stop crying. I didn't mean you, I meant the whole ball of wax, the whole enchilada, okay? Stop crying.

Rena What are you going to do, Laura? What are you going to do?

Laura Good question, honey. But I don't like life very much, and I don't like my chances.

Rena Wait till you get older and have a family of your own.

Laura I don't want to have a family of my own.

Rena Why not?

Laura There are too many people in this world already.

Rena Don't start with the drugs.

Laura Come on, we been using drugs since we were twelve.

Rena Yeah, but I mean.

Laura The whole country is demented with drugs. Stupefied and fat.

Rena You know what I mean.

Laura Whatever works.

Rena That Spanish guy is no good. Antonio. They hate white people, they have a deep resentment.

Laura Can you blame them?

Rena Yeah, let 'em go back to Mexico or wherever.

Laura Nobody knows what's gonna happen next, Rena. The whole thing's out of control.

Rena Who told you that?

Laura A guy I know named Rondell.

Rena Rondell? That's a stupid name.

Laura I know it is.

Rena But what do you think, as a person?

Laura I guess a person could have their satisfactions, they could have their pleasures, but a person is always wrong, no matter what they do or say, they're wrong, because they're a very limited type of creature who can only think one way. They think about themselves and then they think about themselves and the whole universe is a projection of themselves.

Rena No hope.

Laura No. And don't start crying about it.

Rena I'm not crying. Do I look like I'm crying?

Laura I'll see you, Rena.

Rena Where you going?

Laura I have an appointment. I'm an hour late already.

Rena I'll come over, okay?

Laura Sure, Rena, come over...
Interior. Day.

Monica Where you been?

Laura Out.

Monica What do mean out?

Laura Out means out.

Monica You better talk straight to me you little bitch or the ride is over.

Laura It's over anyway, so fuck off.

Monica If it wasn't for your father, I'd have you locked up.

Laura Where is he? Where's Dad?

Monica I don't know.

Laura Why don't you know?

Monica Don't you dare interrogate me.

Laura You drove him out of the house with your tyrannical ways.

Monica Smart ass.

Laura It's true. I'm the smartest person around here by a long shot. A lot of good that'll do me.

Monica What's that?

Laura I said, a lot of good that'll do me.

Monica Because you're too damn conceited.

Laura Come on down and say that. Come on down.

Monica I'm coming!

Laura Come on!

Monica I'm not afraid of you!

Laura Come on down!
A pause, then she walks out and slams the door.
Cut to: Rondell's place.

Rondell You take a lot of dope?

Laura Since I was eleven. I've taken every kind of dope you can think of. Acid, coke, grass, hashish, mescaline, LSD, amphetemine, methadrine, heroin, Xanax, methadone, Halcyon, Zantac, alcohol—

Rondell Sex?

Laura Since I was eleven.

Rondell Jeez, that's worse than me even.

Laura When did you start?

Rondell I was a teenager.

Laura What do you do, actually?

Rondell I'm a junkie, an addict.

Laura No, I mean how do you keep yourself going?

Rondell I move stuff, buy weight and break it up, make enough to use and a small profit. I bring people together, take a percentage. I'm like an agent.

Laura What'd you do before?

Rondell I was in the army. I was in 'Nam. That's where I first used. You realize pretty quick the whole thing's stupid. Freedom and democracy. They's just code words for moneymaking. Means fuck you, give me the money.

Laura I agree with that. I wish there was one thing in this world that isn't done for money.

Rondell You could try AA.

Laura I'm not an alcoholic. And anyway, I'm still a teenager.

Rondell You could try the church.

Laura I'm not a believer. And that's all they do.

Rondell What's that?

Laura Believe.

Rondell How about school?

Laura It's all in code, just like you say. They're bullshitting, saying stuff to scare you, make you comply, buy their shit.

Rondell Well, there ain't nothin' out here, I can tell you that. I'd think it all over some more if I was you.

Laura Okay, thanks.
Back to Rena's house.

Laura Yeah, I talked to this guy and he's an honest guy for a dope addict.

Rena I wouldn't be so sure.

Laura Army guy, actually.

Rena So?

Laura He was in Vietnam.

Rena Most people don't even know where that is.

Laura Do you?

Rena No, actually. (*Laughter*)

Laura You ever do it with two?

Rena For real?

Laura Yeah, for real.

Rena Almost.

Laura Did you like it?

Rena I almost liked it. Why?

Laura I think I'd like it.

Rena Why?

Laura No reason, I'm only asking.

Rena Nasty.

Laura I don't know what's right.

Rena You shouldn't do sex for fun.

Laura Why not?

Rena Because you want to be treated like a person, I would think.

Laura Yeah.

Rena I wouldn't want to be a slut, I don't think.

Laura No.

Rena I think I'll get married.

Laura Take your time, Rena.

Rena You got to watch that.

Laura I been having counselors for years, you know.

Rena Uh-huh.

Laura Say I'm self-destructive, antisocial, obsessive-compulsive, manic-depressive, paranoid and masochistic.

Rena Me, I'm neurotic.

Laura That's normal. Say I fight with my mother because I want to get with my father.

Rena Oh, horseshit.

Laura I feel like I *am* my mother, actually.

Rena It's a bunch of horseshit.

Laura It's a money trap, for hustlers and their marks.

Rena There you go.

Laura Am I being paranoid?

Rena Not to me you're not.

Laura God, it's so confusing.
The office of Dr. Jones. Interior. Day.

Dr. Jones How are you, Laura?

Laura Confused.

Dr. Jones Tell me why.

Laura We keep going around in circles. We're not going anywhere.
(Silence)

You're not going to say anything?

Dr. Jones What do you want me to say?

Laura Something from your own real self.

Dr. Jones I'm very glad to see you.

Laura I got other things to do, you know.

Dr. Jones Of course you do. How are things at home?

Laura The same as the same. My mother is angry and my father is absent.

Dr. Jones Where is your father?

Laura He's going to AA meetings now, says he's discovered the real America.

Dr. Jones Oh. What do you think?

Laura I think the real America is out of its mind. Like me.

Dr. Jones Are you out of your mind?

Laura Come on, Dr. Jones. don't ask me shit like that.

Dr. Jones Oh. Sorry.
(Pause)

Laura Are you waiting for me to say something?

Dr. Jones What is the real America?

Laura The real America is the Destroyer of Souls.
(Pause)
Are you waiting for me to say something again?

Dr. Jones That sounded religious.

Laura They're always talking about God. It's a code word for power. And then there's Jesus Christ. You got to get Jesus. Another code. For self-righteousness. You got all these self-righteous Christians sitting around planning the destruction of the earth. It's very depressing, very depressing.

Dr. Jones Are you getting any benefit from the Wellbutrin?

Laura I'm taking Zoloft, not Wellbutrin. Jesus.
Dr. Jones recovers quickly.

Dr. Jones Are you?

Laura No, not enough. Not enough benefit. I think I need something. Something more, something stronger, something that works. Something that'll work, finally.

Dr. Jones Wait a minute.
Dr. Jones steps out of his office. He goes into the waiting room pretending to himself that he is looking for his next patient. No. No one there. He sees the room through Laura's eyes.

Laura Stupid room. You press a button and the name lights up and you wait. Doctors' time is extra valuable, more valuable than ours. Then he comes out of the inner sanctum to get—you. Especially you.

Fuck this shit. This sucks.

Dr. Jones I didn't know what drug she was on. I got the wrong drug. She's blindsided herself, she's trapped in her protest. I really can't do anything about it. I don't know what's driving me, I don't know who's standing here in my shoes, I don't know what I'm doing, I'm tired.
He rubs his forehead self-consciously—as though someone were watching him—takes a breath, absolves himself, ah what the fuck, and goes back inside.

Dr. Jones What's up, Laura?
He asks.

Laura I binged.

Dr. Jones Oh.

Laura You know, it's too much.

Dr. Jones I have about five minutes.

Laura I overdid it.

Dr. Jones What?

Laura Sex.

Dr. Jones Laura. Did you...?

Laura I took precautions, I took precautions. Is it okay for me to tell you this shit?

Dr. Jones Of course it is.

Laura You're not gonna tell on me?

Dr. Jones Of course not.

Laura Not my parents?

Dr. Jones No.

Laura Not the school?

Dr. Jones No.

Laura Not the police?

Dr. Jones Why the police?

Laura Yes or no?
Dr. Jones No.
Laura Okay.
Dr. Jones But you can't put me in a bad spot.
Laura I took a bunch of amphetimine. You know, and it makes you want to fuck your brains out. So I did.
Dr. Jones Don't tell me any names.
Laura I wasn't going to.
Dr. Jones Now what, Laura?
Laura I don't know. Next time I'll drink instead. That's what my mother does. Don't say I told you.
Dr. Jones I have to talk to your mother.
Laura I'm just saying.
Dr. Jones What?
Laura She's a foody.
Dr. Jones What does that mean?
Laura She's like, hungry. Hungry, hungry. She's hungry all the time. So then she fasts for a while and then she gives my father a hard time.
Dr. Jones Did you just make all that up?
Laura No. Maybe.
Dr. Jones Let's get back to you, Laura.
Laura With crank you don't feel like eating, but you could get turned on.
Dr. Jones You have to stop. Period.
Laura Yeah. Big time.
Dr. Jones I'm serious, Laura.
Laura She can't satisfy her thirst so she turns on him.
Dr. Jones I'm talking to you, Laura.
Laura She makes him crawl.

Dr. Jones And you?
Laura Me, I don't take no shit from her. Not anymore.
(Suddenly breaks into tears)
Dr. Jones Oh, Laura, honey. You got to stop all this. Just stop.
Laura No, I never will. Never!
Close on Laura as she cries. Cut to: Rena's place. Interior Day.
Rena So, you still gonna move out?
Laura You bet. Definitely. It's the biggest fucking industry in the world, you know.
Rena What?
Laura Drugs, Rena. Very big. And I want to have some fucking pleasure in my life.
Rena I can hear that.
Laura Pleasure is an attribute of Paradise. Did you know?
Rena No.
Laura According to my Mom. So you have to pay for it, of course. Up to your eyebrows in shit.
Hold on Laura, then back home again, with Charles.
Charles You can talk to me, honey.
Laura No, I can't.
Charles Why not?
Laura You're drunk.
Charles I been sober eighteen months.
Laura You're drunk, anyway.
Charles No, I'm not.
Laura Anyway, you always listen to her.
Charles I listen to you.
Laura No, you always take her side.

Charles I do?

Laura You know you do. Why lie about it? You know you do and then you squirm.

Charles I'm not going to try and bullshit you, Laura.

Laura Good, Dad.

Charles I'm not going to lie.

Laura Good. Don't start crying about it.

Charles I'm not.

Laura And I don't understand why you cave the way you do.

Charles It's no use arguing. Makes everything worse.

Laura You're timid.

Charles Not all the time. Sometimes I am. Other situations, other people, I'm not timid at all.

Laura Not me. I'm not timid.

Charles You're shy.

Laura I'm not shy.

Charles I thought you were shy.

Laura I'm not.

Charles You don't speak up at school.

Laura What can you say in that stupid sinkhole?

Charles You have to do well in school.

Laura Why?

Charles Because it's tough out there, it's harsh.

Laura Well, that's true, Dad.

Charles You have to make the grade. Are you still seeing your counselor?

Laura Yeah, I am.

Charles Mrs. Williams. She's nice.

Laura Yeah, she is.

Charles Well, that's good.

Laura What does Mom think?

Charles You know what she thinks.

Laura She's hard on me.

Charles She has your interests at heart. She wants what's best for you. She just turned out to be more the authority, the disciplinarian.

Laura I wish it was more you.

Charles I just don't have the temperament for it.

Laura Yeah, Dad.

Charles It's because of the way I grew up.

Laura Your mother wasn't nice to you.

Charles No. You've heard it all before, haven't you?

Laura Yeah, Dad.

Charles So I tend to withdraw.

Laura I'm sorry.

Charles That's okay.

Laura I'm telling you in advance.

Charles What?

Laura That I'm sorry.

Charles Sorry for what?

Laura Just sorry, Dad. Sorry, sorry, sorry.

Cut to: Rondell's place.

Rondell You thought it over, girl?

Laura Not exactly.

Rondell What you want here, then?

Laura I'd like a shot.

Rondell Can you pay?

Laura I'll work it off.

Rondell Pardon?

Laura You can trick me for it.

Rondell I'm not interested, personally.

Laura You're not?

Rondell No.

Laura That's unusual. Are you gay?

Rondell No. I'm an addict monk.

Laura Really?

Rondell I'm abstemious.

Laura Nice.

Rondell I abstain.

Laura I got it.

Rondell Just dope and business. But I'll talk to my partner, Antonio, if you're down.

Laura Where would it be?

Rondell Where would what be?

Laura My fix?

Rondell Right here if you want.

Laura Yes. And can you do it?

Rondell Sure.

Laura I can't do it myself.

Rondell My man will set you up with some dates.

Laura I'll need a place to stay.

Rondell That's on you.

Laura And some money. I'm young and I'm good.

Rondell You can talk it over with Antonio. But I'll tell you, there's competition.

Laura There's none as young or as good as me, I know that.

Rondell I'm sure he'll be flexible.

Laura And one other thing. If I OD, don't bring me back.

Rondell Say again?

Laura You heard me. I'm asking you as a friend.

Rondell Go home, Laura.

Laura No.

Rondell Go home and think some more. I ain't nobody's friend. *Exterior Day. At a meeting: Laura, Dan, Gary, and Charles. They end up standing next to each other with the smokers. Charles lights up.*

Charles Smoke?

Gary No, thank you.

Charles You look familiar.

Gary Sure, we met, couple weeks ago, right here. Name's Gary.

Charles Right, Charles. This is my daughter, Laura. She's seventeen.

Laura *(Embarrassed)* Dad.

Charles What's up?

Laura Nothing, Dad. You don't have to tell them my age.

Charles Sorry.

Gary This here is Dan.

Charles Hi, Dan.

Dan Hi.

Laura Hi.

Dan Hi.

Antonio And so they looked at each other, into each other's eyes, the two young people, los Jovenes, the isolated and the damned, the soon to be vanished from earth, los Desparecidos.

Gary I got eighteen months. My boy here's got eleven days.

Marcia To live?

Gloria No. Don't say things like that. Don't even think it.

Charles Congratulations. Laura?

Laura What?

Dan Thank you.

Laura Great.

Charles Me, it's a couple of years.

Gary You in college?

Laura No.

Charles She's a senior in high school.

Dan Oh, cool.

Laura What do you mean?

Dan Nothing. Just cool.
He stopped breathing right there, for a moment, our Danny Boy.

Gary Great, that's a nice time, high school.

Laura Yeah, it is.

Gary What did you think of the meeting?

Laura It was okay. It was fine.

Gary I didn't hear what you said.

Laura When? Just now?

Gary No, at the meeting.

Laura I didn't speak at the meeting.

Gary Oh, sorry.

Laura That was the girl behind me.

Dan That wasn't her, Dad.

Gary I understand.

Charles This was her—Laura's—first meeting.

Gary Well, I hope you keep on coming back, Laura.

Laura Why?

Gary Be good for you, that's why.

Laura Let's go, Dad.

Gary Might save your life.

Charles Nice to see you again.
Exits with Laura.

Dan So that's how I met Laura. I'd forgotten that. I had met her, Laura, outside a meeting, and forgot about it, and then I saw her on TV, I mean in a movie, having sex in a movie, on a video, but I didn't know it, I had no idea what would happen, that I would be in a room with her and she'd be dead.

Gary Or that he himself would be murdered in the park one day, a mile or so away, probably at random, by some idiot *pistolero*.

Dan It was incredibly sad.

Gary While the American economy rocks on—murderously indifferent to the deaths of these sweet young people—bullets flying in every direction, cars crashing, bombs exploding, sirens wailing, buildings burning, it's a flare-up on the sun and so we're violent and we love it, because it's us.
Cut back to: Laura's house. Interior. Day.

Monica You think it's interesting now, but you wait, it won't seem so interesting. It'll seem dirty, actually, and strange. Dirty and strange. You mark my words.

Laura I don't think so.

Monica You don't, eh?

Laura No.

Monica Little Missie doesn't think so.

Laura No.

Monica I was an adolescent once myself. Species survival.

Laura You're so smart, Mom.

Monica You're more like me. You're like me much more than your father.

Laura I know that.

Monica I did all that stuff in the sixties. I believed there were causes then.

Laura What do you think now?

Monica Now I think the sun flares and the earth creatures down here get agitated.
Moments later: Charles and Monica's house.
Exterior day.

Charles I notice I get paranoid when I hear talk about sexual activities of various kinds.

Monica Do you, Charles?

Charles I don't know why.

Monica I know why.

Charles Actually, I do know why. It's because the subject is fraught, fraught with danger.

Monica Danger to you?

Charles Danger in the human situation.

Monica Lies and delusion.

Charles Fear, domination, jealousy, rage.

Monica And so on.

Charles Yes. It's amazing how people manage to keep their sanity.

Monica Do they, Charles?

Charles Where's Laura?

Monica Keep their sanity?

Charles Is she at Rena's? Why don't you call over there?

Monica You do it, Charles. All right, I'll call.
Cut back to Rena's house.

Rena You just have to be patient, and look ahead. Then the next thing you know, you'll be there, like nothing ever happened.

Laura True.

Rena That's my theory of life.

Laura Sounds good.

Rena So you're not gonna stay depressed forever, you're not gonna be lonely forever, or they're not gonna be mad at you forever, or whatever.

Laura You rhymed.

Rena You know?

Laura Yes.

Rena So you have to stay cool.

Laura Yeah.

Rena And hang with it.

Laura I don't care, really, when you come right down to it.

Rena You should care.

Laura I know I should, but I don't.

Rena You have to, Laura.

Laura If I die?

Rena What?

Laura There'll be one less person, one less body, one less mouth on the earth. I don't think that's so bad. So, I don't care.

Rena Why should you die?

Laura I mean hypothetically.

Rena Hypothetically everybody dies.

Laura *(Laughing)* True.

Rena You know, so chill.

Laura Okay.
Phone ring.

Rena I'll bet that's your parents.

Laura Don't answer it.
Laura stares at the phone. She counts to herself: one, two, three, four. One, two, three, four.

Rena It's probably your parents.
One, two, three, four. Rondell's Place. Sound of gunfire in the streets.

Dan Hey? Rondell? Rondell, you in there?

Rondell That you, Danny Boy? What up?

Dan Open the door!

Rondell Come in.

Dan Thank you.

Rondell Don't be agitated.

Dan There's a fucking gang war going on out there, it's a war zone. Bullets flying in every direction. I don't know why I said that or who said it. It sounded just like my father. "Bullets flying in every direction." It's one of his favorite expressions.

Rondell You on speed?

Dan No. Why?

Rondell You're talking fast.

Dan You seen many bodies?

Rondell You mean dead bodies?

Dan You must have, in Vietnam.

Rondell I have. I seen more than a few. Corpses and half of corpses and quarter corpses.

Dan And?

Rondell They're weird. You stare at 'em long enough you think they moved. You should go to a morgue sometime.

Dan I don't think so. You ever go out, Rondell?

Rondell 'Course I do. I go to Mexico two or three times a month for re-supply. Then I lie very low. What you want?

Dan Nothing.

Rondell You still clean?

Dan Yes. I'm clean and sober. I just need a place to chill.

Rondell I'll give you a key, you don't have to bother me with the door.

Dan You're a hard man, Rondell.

Rondell What's up with your parents?

Dan They're doing a lot better.

Rondell I'm glad.

Dan Both my mother and my stepmother and of course Gary, even though he's been out of work maybe a year now.

Rondell Actors.

Dan It's the life.

Rondell If you all cleaned up why you hanging here?

Dan I told you, gunfire in the park.

Rondell Go home, kid.

Dan Why?

Rondell Come back later, or tomorrow. I got someone coming over, she won't want to see you here.
Danny Boy senses his own frightened swagger as he slouches through Rondell's door. Then he steps out into the LA night, bullets flying in every direction. Maybe he feels his own death coming at him, a random fly-by, an aimless bullet through the heart.

But probably not.
Nor does he know what he'll see when he soon goes back to Rondell's place, jacked up on a bit of speed.

Dan She looked so pale and lonely on the screen, even with that man inside her, and her eyes were so black. Now there was a shrieking in my ears like my blood was pumping through a steam whistle. I tried not to look at her, but her eyes, they were so big and black, so black, like holes. The stars were gone.

Take a good look at Danny Boy and fade to:

Gary It's so strange, you know, looking out through the eyes, all this complicated machinery.

Marcia What is?

Gary Well, that's what I'm saying.

Marcia What?

Gary About life.

Marcia What about it? You say all these half-baked things and you expect me to fill in the gaps.

Gary Good point.

Marcia Okay, try again.

Pause.

Don't sulk, Gary.

Sound of a leaf blower.

Gary Good grief. I can barely stand it. They want revenge, these people, for us stealing California. Anyway, I know this lady, she's a regular at my meeting, she's got maybe forty years. She's a wonderful woman, she always says, don't forget, Gary, there's another reality. There's another reality, hidden, inside of us, that sees all this.

Really. You don't have to take my word for it. You can see for yourself.

Marcia I'm just glad about Danny Boy, that he's cleaned up, finally. I feel like I can breathe again.

Rondell's. Interior Day

Laura Hi.

Rondell Come on in, honey. You know Antonio.

Laura Hello.

Antonio *Buenas.*

Rondell How you been? Okay?

Laura I feel fine.

Rondell You have symptoms?

Laura Symptoms?

Rondell Withdrawal symptoms.

Laura Not really.

Rondell She has a great constitution, very unusual.

Antonio *Eso es.*

Rondell You want to fix?

Laura Why I'm here.

Antonio Nice to see you.

Laura Thanks.

Antonio You look great on the TV. *Fabuloso.*

Laura Yeah.

Antonio You have a good time?

Laura It's okay.

Antonio Bravo.

Rondell She's great.

Antonio *Sí. Claro.*

Rondell I gotta go out now.

Laura You go out?

Rondell You can fix yourself. Antonio will help you. It's excellent stuff, so go easy.

Laura Where you going?

Rondell I have matters to attend to. I'm still in the National Guard.

Laura Oh. Good luck with that.

Rondell So I'll leave you with Antonio.

Laura Bye.

Antonio *Adiós.*

Rondell I'll see you in a few days.

Laura Okay.
Rondell exits.

Antonio You like, eh?

Laura I like.

Antonio Calm, peaceful.

Laura Yes.

Antonio *No problemas.*

Laura Right. You use?

Antonio Tequila, it's enough for me.

Laura Help me tie off.

Antonio *Bueno. Pero no tengo mucho tiempo.*

Laura That's all, then you can go.

Antonio *Sabe usted, en proxima semana, es el Día de los Muertos?* You know this? It's the Day of the Dead. Then we have skulls and bones. *Blanca.* Shining in the dark.
Ah, the rush. Fear and pain are overcome at last.
It feels good, it feels sweet, it feels warm.

Laura I think I'll lie down.

Antonio And you can hear waves, waves in the dark, waves of dark, and the moon is luminous, and the sky is vibrant, with many bright stars, and drums and flutes are playing somewhere in the distance, an Indian sound, an approaching music, the sound of America, of indigenous America, cruel and pure, and powerful, absolute, with a light surpassing the light of the Sun.

The End